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*Putting History to the Question:  
An Episode of Torture at Bantam in Java, 1604*

"If the story seems stupid, that is only because it so doggedly holds its silence. The shadow whose lack you feel is there: it is the loss of Friday's tongue. . . . The story of Friday's tongue is a story unable to be told, or unable to be told by me. That is to say, many stories can told of Friday's tongue, but the true story is buried within Friday, who is mute. The true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday."

—Susan Barton in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*

This busie, puzzling, stirrer up of doubt,  
That frames deep *Mysteries*, then finds 'em out.

—John Wilmot, *A Satire Against  
Reason and Mankind*

The deployment of suggestive anecdote has become one of the hallmarks of "New Historicism." Although it is a technique that owes something to the rhetoric of post-structuralist anthropology and the mode of "thick description" favored by Clifford Geertz, its popularity has less to do with any systematically articulated methodology or theoretical position (to which New Historicists have been generally resistant) than with the seductive practice of the school's most celebrated exponent, Stephen Greenblatt.<sup>1</sup> In his intro-

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1. The very want of a firm theoretical base means that it is in many ways misleading to think of New Historicism as a "school" in any strict sense. Indeed some of the most powerful criticisms of the Greenblattian approach have been made by other so-called "New Historicists." See, e.g., Louis Montrose, "New Historicisms" in *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation*

duction to *Learning to Curse*, an essay couched in the disarmingly confessional idiom that he reserves for such occasions, Greenblatt reflects on the aetiology of his approach to the writing of cultural history, which he sees as reflecting “my will to tell stories, critical stories or stories told as a form of criticism.”<sup>2</sup> The compulsive lure of narrative he associates with its capacity for “estrangement”: “the narrative impulse in my writing is yoked to the service of literary and cultural criticism; it pulls out and away from myself. . . . I am committed to the project of making strange what has become familiar, of demonstrating that what seems an untroubling and untroubled part of ourselves (for example, Shakespeare) is actually part of something else, something different” (p. 8). Citing Joel Fineman’s remarks on the role of anecdote in New Historicism’s “conjunction of the literary and the referential,” Greenblatt seeks to substitute a more tactical mode of historical inquiry for the strategic approach of traditional history, with its “grand, integrated narrative[s] of beginning, middle and end.” Anecdote serves to put history to the question: its effect, *à la* Foucault, is to fracture the reassuring coherence of such teleological structures by “*introduc[ing] an opening*” (my emphasis) into their otherwise impermeable surface.<sup>3</sup> For Greenblatt, as for Fineman, what

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*of English and American Studies*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn (New York, 1992), pp. 392–418. Montrose traces what he sees as a want of theoretical rigor to Geertz’s own practice (p. 399–400), and argues that its synchronic approach to the study of culture results in a criticism whose preoccupation with cohesive and closed systems often seems more formalist than truly historicist in that “it makes no theoretical space for change or contestation. Such a position might be said to reinstate the Elizabethan world picture but now transposed into the ironic mode” (p. 403). A similar critique of Geertzian cultural analysis is offered by the historian Ronald G. Walters: “The tendency of thick description and semiotics is to reinforce the impulse to burrow in and not to try to connect the dots. That occurs because what is an analytical strength—Geertz’s attention to particularity and his orientation towards the actor’s perspective—is a weakness for synthesis. Thick description leads to brilliant readings of individual situations, rituals, and institutions. It does not require saying how ‘cultural texts’ relate to each other or to general processes of social and economic change” (“Signs of the Times: Clifford Geertz and Historians,” *Social Research*, 47 [1980], 551–52; cited in Aletta Biersack, “Local Knowledge, Local History: Geertz & Beyond,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, 1989), p. 79. See also Vincent P. Pecora, “The Limits of Local Knowledge,” in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser (New York, 1989), pp. 243–76. Frank Lentricchia’s “Foucault’s Legacy: A New Historicism?” in the same collection (pp. 231–42), although directed mainly at the residual humanism of Foucault, makes some sharp jabs at Greenblatt’s anecdotal method.

2. Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York, 1990), p. 5.

3. Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote: Fact and Fiction,” in Veesser, pp. 49–76; cited in Greenblatt, p. 5.

is so compelling about anecdote is exactly its “insistence on contingency”—its power to create “the sense if not of a break then at least of a swerve in the ordinary and well-understood succession of events.” In a fashion quite opposed to the methods of traditional historiography, anecdote “functions less as an explanatory illustration than as disturbance, that which requires explanation, contextualization, interpretation” (p. 5). In orthodox practice, by contrast, historical evidence is deployed precisely “to lay contingency and disturbance to rest”; and in so doing it suppresses the very response which, to Greenblatt’s way of thinking, ought to link the “reading” of historical events with the reading of literature: “Anecdotes are the equivalent in the register of the real of what drew me to the study of literature: the encounter with something I could not stand not understanding, that I could not quite finish with or finish off . . . I do not want history to enable me to escape the effect of the literary but to deepen it by making it touch the effect of the real, a touch that would reciprocally deepen and complicate history” (p. 5). The emotion being evoked here, with more than a touch of nostalgia, is what Greenblatt (anxious in spite of everything to stake out a space for the aesthetic) calls “wonder”; and the “conjunction of the literary and the referential” at which he aims is one designed to reinvigorate with “wonder” everything that conventional history and criticism have conspired to render (misleadingly) familiar.

It would be perverse to deny the brilliant successes of his anecdotal approach in the best of Greenblatt’s work—especially in the book that established his reputation, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. But the gathering insistence in his more recent writing upon the centrality of wonder and estrangement, while bespeaking a sympathetic humility before the sheer *otherness* of the past, marks an increasing divergence from mainstream historicist practice, and is associated with a sometimes wayward approach to documentary evidence of which professional historians often complain.<sup>4</sup> For all the parade of humility,

4. Greenblatt is by no means alone in such waywardness of course, for New Historicist contextualizing can sometimes be a remarkably selective matter. Karen Newman’s justly admired (and several times reprinted) essay on race and gender in *Othello*, for example, cites a passage on slavery from Bodin (*The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, trans. Richard Knolles [1606], III, viii, p. 387) which is said to display “the conventional prejudice about black sexuality”: “There be in mans bodie some members, I may not call them filthie (for that nothing can so be which is naturall) but yet so shamefull, as that no man except he be past all shame, can without blushing reveale or discover the same: and doe they [blacks] for that cease to be members of the

moreover, it is difficult not to notice that Greenblatt's method is particularly well adapted to displaying the interpretative power of the critic, since the greater the sense of wonder and estrangement produced by a given anecdote, the more dazzling his explanatory performance must seem. This in turn can involve a somewhat condescending stance toward the subjects of historical investigation who, Caliban-like, are supposed not to know their own meaning until the New Historicist Prospero arrives to endow their brutish gabble with words that make them known. *Learning to Curse*, ironically enough, offers a particularly striking case in point.

A little later in his introduction Greenblatt produces an arresting example of his anecdotal repertory in the form of Edmund Scott's account of the interrogation and execution of a Chinese goldsmith by the English factors at Bantam in 1604.<sup>5</sup> Scott's narrative, with its unsettlingly matter-of-fact cataloguing of horrors, its occasional heavy-handed irony, and extraordinary excess of violence, is presented as perfectly exemplifying the function of anecdote as a vehicle of "disturbance"; all that is required to respond to it apparently is "a hatred of cruelty and a sense of wonder" (p. 13). Yet the provocation to wonder in this case proves to be frustratingly unprofitable, since the "explanation [and] interpretation" it seems to invite (the very things upon which the heuristic function of anecdote might seem to depend) are toyed with only to be deliberately and teasingly withheld.

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whole bodie?" Bodin, she explains, "is so shamed by those members, and by the Africans' custom of exposing them, that he dresses his prose in a series of parentheses which effectively obscure its meaning" (Karen Newman, "'And wash the Ethiop white': femininity and the monstrous in *Othello*," in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard & Marion F. O'Connor [London, 1987,] pp. 148-49; my emphasis). The passage does indeed read like a remarkable illustration of a familiar European racial neurosis; so that it comes as something of a shock to discover that Newman's glossing of "slaves" as "blacks" and her reference to African genital exposure have no warrant whatsoever in Bodin's text, which is discussing the classical institution of slavery in a context utterly removed from the sixteenth-century African slave trade. Bodin is engaged in a theoretical argument with Aristotle and other classical authors concerning "*the orders and degrees of Citizens*," which at this point has only a marginal contemporary application; indeed he is particularly anxious to fend off any supposition that "I should desire slauerie long since taken away out of our Commonweale, to be thereinto againe restored" (p. 387; my emphasis). Admitting, however, that "the force and boldnesse of men is so farre broken out, as that wee see seruitude and slauerie by little and little to creepe in, and returne againe," he hopes that his arguments may serve an ameliorative purpose. But race is nowhere at issue.

5. Edmund Scott, *An Exact Discourse of the Subtilties, Fashions, Religion and Ceremonies of the East Indians* (1606).

Greenblatt proceeds as though he were about to satisfy the hermeneutic appetites he has so carefully aroused, explaining that Scott's narrative needs to be understood primarily as a weapon in the dispute over remuneration that broke out after his return from Java—a dispute arising from his uncertain status as an unsalaried factor who had risen to become the East India Company's principal agent in Bantam only after the death of two superiors. Insofar as Scott's pamphlet was designed to advance his cause, "every detail may well reflect his idea of what would most impress the Company's directors" (p. 14).<sup>6</sup> In that case, the extremity of the English reaction to what was, after all, only a "crime against property," "an attempt to rob them of their gold" (pp. 11, 13) would simply be meant to illustrate Scott's tireless pursuit of the Company's material interests. Against this grossness of motivation and Scott's "complacent acceptance of his own acts" (p. 14) Greenblatt sets the imaginative force of the victim's silence, which becomes an ironic demonstration of "the torturer's inability to turn pain into a manifestation of his power" (p. 14). But at the very point when he seems about to discover "meaning" in this dumb resistance, the interpreter suddenly, and rather bafflingly, abdicates: "This is not the place to tease out the implications of Scott's text; I have only wanted to indicate the kinds of questions that it raises, for they are questions that are implicit in most of the essays" (pp. 14–15).

What is one to make of this move? The abdication is the more puzzling because Greenblatt has just exposed his retelling to a number of probing questions: "What are we to do with such a passage? what is history to make of it? . . . Is it vulgar or even lurid to rehearse Scott's text? Scott is by our lights a sadist, but is it also sadistic to quote him?"

6. Scott may well have hoped that the pamphlet would improve his standing with the Company: as an unpaid supernumerary who had to pay his own way to the Moluccas by taking up a £ 200 share in the first voyage, he was in an uncertain position, despite his *de facto* succession to the agency. But the circumstances of its publication suggest that his pamphlet was written before the dispute broke out. It was dedicated to Sir William Romney, Governor of the East India Company, 1606–1607, and printed for Walter Burre, a bookseller who was later to publish tracts associated with the Virginia company, as well as treatises on trade, surveying, and the cultivation of tobacco. Burre was brother-in-law to Sir Henry Middleton, General of the second voyage, and had issued the anonymous account of Middleton's expedition, *The Last East-Indian Voyage* (1606), earlier in the same year.

Burre entered *The Last East-Indian Voyage* on the Stationers' Register as early as May 20, 1606, a bare fortnight after the arrival of Middleton's small fleet; and since his epistle "To the Reader" vigorously advertises Scott's forthcoming pamphlet, the *Exact Discourse* must presumably have been written very soon after Scott's return.

Given his use of the metaphor of "opening," it is not, I think, accidental that a story of torture should be employed to illustrate the compelling power of narrative. Noting that "the Chinese victim was uncannily, unimaginably, perhaps heroically silent," Greenblatt wonders whether it is proper "after all this time, finally to compel him to speak?" But these questions remain rhetorical, serving only to point up the admirable reticence implicit in Greenblatt's gesture of withdrawal—a gesture which serves at once to dissociate him from the prosaically motivated cruelty of the torturer (with whom his own interrogation of history might otherwise uncomfortably associate him), and to exhibit his decent liberal concern for the victim's right to silence. Yet the abdication, however it may be cast as a repudiation of power over the Other (in the name of a nescient wonder) also functions, paradoxically enough, as an assertion of power, serving to reinforce the critic's authority—not only over the text, but also over readers who have been seduced into participation in his confessional "we." Like Hamlet's enigmatic "O, I could tell you," Greenblatt's teasing aposiopesis announces the possibility of extraordinary revelations only to refuse them, leaving readers haunted by a story whose only function now is to call in question both their own interpretative capacity and their good faith: "Is there not some hidden pleasure, some imaginative provocation, in this spectacle of torture?" Certainly, we are meant to feel, there must be—and Greenblatt could expose it if he chose.

The strategy becomes more disturbing when it is recognized that his essay significantly misrepresents the circumstances of the goldsmith's arrest and interrogation. Seen in the full context of Scott's *Exact Discourse of the Subtilties, Fashions, Religion and Ceremonies of the East Indians*, both the horrific extremity of the torture and the narrator's chilling attitude toward it become much more straightforwardly explicable than Greenblatt pretends.<sup>7</sup> In fact the narrative's power to disturb arises less from any sense of wonder and estrangement than from its troubling familiarity. Although the goldsmith's silence certainly introduces an element of painful undecidability into the text, Scott's account of matters remains, in ways that are only too recog-

7. A trenchant attack on Greenblatt's failure to explore the psychological context of Scott's frenzy is mounted by Anne Barton in her review of *Learning to Curse*. See *New York Review of Books*, 38: 6 (March 28, 1991), 52–53.

nizable, both coherent and psychologically consistent. Indeed his story of isolation and paranoia is one that, in many of its essentials, might have been invented by a much later traveller in the archipelago, Joseph Conrad; and to invoke wonder and estrangement in this context, I would suggest, is to risk the dubious mystification with which Conrad's Marlow tries to protect himself against his recognition of Mr. Kurtz. Scott's narrative is singularly revealing about the entanglement of violence, racial feeling, and national self-consciousness in early imperial enterprise; but it will yield those revelations only if careful attention is paid to Scott's own voice.

For Greenblatt, the torture and killing of the goldsmith belong so much to the category of the "unimaginable" that to confront the question of their historicity is to "risk a loss of moral bearings," while to explain them in (say) traditional Marxist terms is to run the danger of "losing the dark specificity of [Scott's] account . . . [thus] absorbing the unspeakable but spoken rupture of human relatedness into an abstract, pre-packaged schema" (p. 13). It is the extreme disparity between motive ("an attempt to rob them of their gold") and action (the systematic mutilation and dismemberment of a human body), that seems to push the torturers' behavior into the realm of the criminal sublime. Yet it is plain from Scott's narrative that the English frenzy had much less to do with the loss of material goods than with the intense panic induced by the would-be thieves' undermining and firing of the English trading factory. It is equally clear, moreover, that from the point of view of the English in Bantam, "considering the place, and extremities we were in" (sig. A2v), firing and undermining had become symbolically charged actions to which no response, however brutal, could appear excessive. Furthermore, by the time Scott came to compose his pamphlet in 1606, his terrors of secret treason, undermining, and blowing-up must have suggested to his readers at large uncanny parallels with the notorious events of November 5, 1605—parallels to which indeed his narration may be consciously tailored.<sup>8</sup>

8. The Gunpowder Plot, which must have been the principal political talking point for the East India Company returnees in the spring of 1606, was already being mobilized as a focus of national self-consciousness, and the bonfires and bells with which the besieged Protestant nation celebrated the defeat of treason would ultimately take the place of Elizabeth's Accession Day in the calendar of political festival described by David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory*

## II

The difficulties faced by the new English factory at Bantam were compounded by the fact that it was established during a period of acute instability in Java. Its installation further complicated already violent rivalries between the Dutch and Portuguese trading empires, and at the local level among Chinese, Indian, and Javan merchants, while it also added to the tensions created by local power struggles, including ethnic, factional, and dynastic rivalries which the newcomers did not well understand. Barely had Captain James Lancaster's fleet arrived than a quarrel broke out with some Javans who, according to Scott, "sought all meanes they could, to be reuenged: in so much, that presently after the departure of our Pinnis, they began to practise the firing of our principall House with firie Darts and Arrowes in the night: And not content with that, in the day time if we had brought out any quantitie of Goods to ayre, we should be sure to haue the towne fiered to windward not farre from vs" (A3v). The terror of arson, first enunciated in this inauspicious beginning, becomes a compulsive theme of Scott's pamphlet. While Greenblatt's synopsis refers offhandedly to "years of commercial rivalry with the Dutch, fear of fire and theft, and growing hatred of both the Javanese<sup>9</sup> and Chinese natives" (p. 11), nowhere does he register the true extremity of fear, amounting to pyrophobia, that the constant threat of fire produced in Scott and the other English.

As Scott reconstructs it, 1604 seems to have been a particularly terrifying year: "My pen affordes to speake of little else but murther, theft, warres, fire, and treason" (D1v). Fire was of course a general hazard in places like Bantam, the construction of local houses rendering them even more combustible than their European counterparts. The *Exact Discourse* mentions at least eighteen major conflagrations during Scott's two-and-a-half year residency—including no fewer than five burnings of the town on the east side of the river, opposite the factory, in a period of only three months (C2). On many of these occasions the merchants not only sustained loss of goods, but

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and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England (Berkeley, 1989). The conspiracy against the English factory, its near blowing-up, and the fiery torture of the plotters are given a similar symbolic centrality in Scott's narrative of the vulnerable "English nation at Bantan."

9. Greenblatt's use of the term "Javanese" is technically inaccurate, since the people of Bantam were properly speaking Sundanese. Accordingly I have preferred the usefully imprecise contemporary term "Javan."



found their lives and factory threatened as well—being saved, as they judged, only by their own watchfulness and that well-known instrument of God's special providence toward the English, the wind. Scott was convinced that many of these fires were deliberately set, noting that in the same short period the Javans also attempted "many times" to burn the town "on our side" (C2).<sup>10</sup> His belief that the arson was often directed specifically against the English was sustained by "many shrewd attempts to have fyred our house" (F4v) or adjacent buildings (B2v). In September 1604 a major conflagration "consumed all the vpper worke of our three houses to our exceeding great danger" (H2v). Repeatedly exposed to threats of burning (F4v, G3, I2v) and "secret fyrework" (G1v), not to mention throat-cutting and the attentions of head-hunters (A3v, B3v), the English became increasingly desperate: "looking every hour when we should be assaulted, [we] durst take no rest at night" (C1v). Such was the condition of near-dementia to which they were reduced by endless nocturnal alarms that men in their beds would "bustle up, and in their sleepe wounde one another" (C1v). Sometimes they lived "in such feare of fyre, that neither I, nor my men durst goe out of doores" (H2); and Scott's own anxiety grew so obsessive that the very word "fire" became anathema to him. Merely to write it, even months after his return, was sufficient to reawaken the old panic:

Oh this worde Fire! had it been spoken neere mee either in *English*, *Mallayes*, *Javans*, or *Chyna*, although I had been sounde a sleepe, yet I should haue leaped out of my Bedde: the which I haue done some times when our men in their Watch haue but whispered one to another of Fire, in somuch that I was forced to warne them not to talke of Fire in the night, except they had great occasion: and not onelie my selfe, but my fellowes, *Thomas Tudde* and *Gabriell Towerson*, who after our Watches had beene out, and wee heauie a sleepe, our men many times haue sounded a Drum at our Chamber doores, and wee neuer heard them; yet presently after, they haue but whispered to them selues of Fire, and wee all haue runne out of our Chambers. . . . And I protest before GOD, I would not sleepe so many nights in feare againe for the best Shippes lading of Pepper that euer came from thence.<sup>11</sup>

10. As outsiders, the English, like the Dutch, were required to establish their factory in the Chinese quarter, outside the city walls on the Western side of the river which served as part of the town's defenses.

11. C1v-C2. Only at this point is Scott, as if alarmed by the disturbed and disturbing force of his own recollections, at pains to insist to his employers that "I speake not this to that ende I tendered my owne priuate life so much, but for feare of the great losse and damage the

Only in the light of this extreme pyrophobic anxiety<sup>12</sup> does it become possible to account for the terrible savagery of the episode that Greenblatt recounts—a climactic “story of theft and fire” in which “*Hinting*,” the Chinese goldsmith, is cast as a principal villain. Objectively speaking, the attack on the English factory amounted to nothing more than a burglary that went dangerously awry; but it was not the mere threat to his material livelihood that so enraged Scott:

a long time wee liued in feare of fire, but now wee felt the brunt and smarte of it, and if God most miraculously had not preserued vs, wee had all perished both liues and goods, the which came to passe by the villany of a *Chynes* borne, but now turned *Iauan*: who was our next neighbour. . . . This offspring of the diuell, and heire of hell . . . became an Ingynner, hauing gott eight fyrebrands of hell more to him, only of purpose to set our house a fyre.

These nyne deepe workers dygged a well . . . from the bottome of which . . . they brought a myne quite under the foundation of our house . . . [W]hen they came up to the planks [of our warehouse]. . . . they durst not cut them. . . . [But] one of theis wicked consortship, being a goldsmith & brought vp alwaies to work in fire, told his fellows he would work out the planks with fire, so that we should neuer heare nor see him. (E1v-2)

Unluckily *Hinting*’s candle set fire to some bales of cloth in the warehouse above and a nearly fatal conflagration ensued: “I hearing this word fire, although I was fast a sleepe, yet it was no need to bid me rise: neither was I long a slipping on my clothes, but presently ranne downe and opened the doores wherat came out such a strong funke & smoake that had almost strangled vs [E2]. . . . and all that time wee had twoe great iars of powder standing in the warehouse, which caused vs greatly to feare blowing vp [E2v]. . . . but had wee knowne then that the *Chyneses* had done it, wee should have sacryfised so many of them, that their bloode should haue helped to haue quenched the fire” (E3v). Acting on information from their Dutch rivals, the English discovered the mine and apprehended a number of

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adventurers and my Country, should have susteyned if wee should haue miscarryed”; and to reassure future employees “the Country is grown to much better ciuilitie” and is now much better disposed toward the English (C2).

12. Scott’s anxieties are supported by the instructions left behind by Middleton on his departure which significantly begin by detailing the precautions that are to be taken to secure the factory against fire. See *The Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton to the Moluccas, 1604–6*, ed. Sir William Foster (London, 1943), p. 195.

Chinese in the adjoining compound. Having been licensed by the Protector<sup>13</sup> of the town to “doe Iustice on those wee had when we would” (F1), they applied hot irons to one of their prisoners, who incriminated several accomplices, including Hinting. The goldsmith was then discovered “hid in a priuie,” and himself put to the question.

If a kind of ironic aptness is implied in the suggestively named “Hinting’s” place of concealment, an even more brutal irony governed the details of his torment. While describing the goldsmith’s application of fire to the warehouse floor, Scott sardonically observes “little did he think [although “brought vp alwaies to worke in fire”], that we should euer come to work with fierie hot Irons vpon him” (E2). Now the torturer begins to savor his vicious conceit: “hee would tell vs nothing. Wherefore because of his sullenesse, and that it was hee that *fired* vs, I thought I would *burne* him now a little, for wee were now in the *heate of our anger*. First I caused him to be burned vnder the nayles of his thumbes, fingers, and toes with sharpe hotte Iron, and the nayles to be torne off, and because hee neuer blemished at that. . . . we burned him in the armes, shoulders, and necke, but all was one with him: then we burned him quite thorow the handes, and with rasphes of Iron tore out the fleshe and sinewes. After that I caused them to knocke the edges of shinne bones with hotte searing Irons” (F2v; italics added). In the context of the pyrophobia that infuses Scott’s writing, his punning reference to “the heate of our anger” (which in Greenblatt’s telling seems mere tasteless embroidery) becomes hideously pointed through its play on the proverbial capacity of fire to drive out fire.<sup>14</sup> Scott presents the application of hot irons as a kind of sympathetic purgation of the goldsmith’s diabolic wickedness:<sup>15</sup> what else but fire, after all, should extinguish a “fire-brand from hell”? One may even feel the narrative’s obsessive iteration of “fire” as attempting a rhetorical duplication of the purge, as if to cast out the terrors evoked by the word.

At the same time, Scott’s emphasis on the ironic symmetries of crime and punishment, echoing the familiar trope of the biter bit, can be felt to indulge the same brutal wit that shapes the vindictive

13. I.e. the *Pangeran*, an uncle of the boy-king, who was acting as regent.

14. Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, 1950), F277; & cf. *Coriolanus* 4.7.54, “one fire drives out one fire.”

15. Compare the way in which fire is used to purge or “quench” the fire of Diaphanta’s lust in *The Changeling* (5.1.31–116).

climaxes of Jacobean tragedy ("Those that did eat are eaten").<sup>16</sup> Yet for all his grim relish, Scott does not seek to justify Hinting's torture primarily as an act of revenge; on the contrary, he is careful to present it as an instrument of interrogation or "discovery"—at once assisting in the operation of a distinctively English mode of justice, and serving to expose the hidden enmities that perpetually threaten to "consume" the entire English enterprise in Bantam. It is fire, that hungry element which gives a paradoxical kind of shape to the nothingness it produces, which more than anything embodies that threat of being consumed; and the systematic application of fire to the source of fire can be read as an attempt to neutralize this threat—an attempt which is carefully (although less than successfully) located within a particular discourse of Englishness.

### III

Coming to his text for the first time one is likely to be struck by the unquestioning alacrity with which Scott and his companions resorted to torture. By what right did these intruders seize on the person of a foreign subject, mutilate and kill him? Scott himself never appears greatly troubled about the legality of his proceedings, for he is careful to record that authority to execute summary justice in their own immediate affairs had been delegated to the English by the Javan authorities (B3, F1), and to insist upon the restraint and scrupulosity with which they exercised this power (D4, F1, F3v).<sup>17</sup> In fact "authority to execute [both] justice on thir owne men offending [and] against injuries from the natives" was among eight key conditions which Lancaster apparently sought to negotiate from the states with whom the English desired to establish trading relations.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless even

16. *Revenger's Tragedy* 3.5.160. Of course, the same fastidiously vicious symmetry was often thought to characterize the operations of divine justice—see, e.g., Thomas Beard's *Theatre of Gods Iudgements* (1597), where the atheistical Christopher Marlowe is instructively made to stab himself in the eye: "herein did the iustice of God most notably appeare, in that hee compelled his owne hand which had written those blasphemies to be the instrument to punish him," quoted in J. Leslie Hotson, *The Death of Christopher Marlowe* (London, 1925), p. 13.

17. Specifically Scott represents the Protector as being so shocked by the sight of the mine ("hee said it was a most villanous peece of worke") that "hee bid us doe Iustice on those wee had when wee would, and so soone as the rest could be found, wee should haue them, so that if wee had no more care then hee; wee might haue executed one that was not in fault" (F1).

18. See the account of Lancaster's voyage in *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 3, 3, p. 147, reprinted in *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster*, ed. Sir William Foster (London, 1940), p. 99. Purchas also

under this dispensation the use of torture seems at first sight surprising, since it was nominally excluded from English judicial proceedings. Given that the Dutch had made the use of judicial torture routine in their trading depots, one might suppose that the behavior of the English merely reflected a rapid and unquestioning adaptation to established local custom—were it not that Englishmen typically made so much of the fact that, although it formed a routine part of the Roman inquisitorial procedures employed elsewhere in Europe, torture had no such properly defined place in English law.<sup>19</sup>

But torture, of course, as its not infrequent appearance in popular drama would suggest, was by no means so unusual in England as such complacent propaganda implied.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, thanks to the work of Elizabeth Hanson and others, it has become clear that, despite its having effectively disappeared from formal legal procedures in the mid-twelfth century, torture enjoyed a significant *de facto* revival in the Tudor period, reaching “its English heyday” in the second half of Elizabeth’s reign;<sup>21</sup> and Scott seems to have thought of his use of it as consistent with a distinctively English practice. The key difference in the English use of torture was that, whereas in Roman-based legal systems its justification lay in the evidential value of the confessions it was designed to extract, in England, where it was normally legitimated by warrant from the Privy Council, it served primarily as a tool of investigation—one substantially restricted, moreover, to ma-

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records that Lancaster had been given specific “commission from the king [of Bantam] that whosoever he tooke about his house in the night, he should kill them” (p. 115).

19. See James Heath, *Torture and English Law* (London, 1982), 142–47; Edward Peters, *Torture* (Oxford, 1985), p. 59; Elizabeth Hanson, “Torture and Truth in Renaissance England,” *Representations* 34 (1991), 56–58. A significant exception was the Council of the Marches in Wales which was specifically authorized to use torture in cases of murder, felony, and treason—a convenience of which Burghley was apparently happy to avail himself since unlike the Star Chamber it could try such capital offenses. See G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution* (Cambridge, Eng., 1960), p. 199; and P. Williams, *The Council in the Marches of Wales under Elizabeth I* (Cardiff, 1958), p. 49.

20. At least one well-known dramatist, Thomas Kyd, was himself subjected to the rack during an investigation of a “libell that concerned the State”—a fate from which Marlowe was saved only by his assassination (see *The Works of Thomas Kyd*, ed. F. S. Boas (Oxford, 1901, p. lxiv), while another, Thomas Norton, the amateur co-author of *Gorboduc*, acted as a torturer for Burghley in the interrogation of Thomas Campion and other Catholic prisoners. Norton subsequently issued a pamphlet justifying the torture on the grounds that their offense was not religious dissent but treason (see below, fn. 23).

21. Heath, *Torture and English Law*, p. 110; & Hanson, pp. 56–58.

jor crimes against the state such as witchcraft and treason.<sup>22</sup> In this context it is significant that not only does Scott identify Hinting's crime as a species of "treason" (D1v) and the work of an "offspring of the divell" (E1v), but he is also careful to establish that the uncovering of hidden co-conspirators was the principal aim of his interrogation. Thus, as I shall try to show, it is of a piece with his narrative's conscious display of Englishness, and (by virtue of the dialectical nature of such self-definition) with its indignant discovery of the not-English.

English writing about torture suggests that its special appropriateness to such crimes as treason and witchcraft was governed as much by symbolic as by practical considerations. What made these offenses seem especially heinous, apart from their obvious threat to authority and the good order of the commonweal, was their clandestine character—revealed in the case of treason by the devious secrecy of its undermining practice.<sup>23</sup> Deemed to occur "in the very thought and cogitation" of the perpetrator, long before it was translated into action, treason was imagined (in Bacon's words) as "a secret thing hidden in the breast of man [that] cannot be known but by an open fact or deed."<sup>24</sup> The suitability of torture to the policing of such surreptitious villainy depended on its power to lay open, in a fashion at once metaphoric and brutally literal, the otherwise inaccessible closet of the inner self.<sup>25</sup> Torture, as Elaine Scarry points out, habitu-

22. L. A. Parry, *The History of Torture in England* (London, 1933) records the occasional use of torture in instances of robbery, murder, embezzling the Queen's plate, and even failure to enforce regulations against stage players, but the overwhelming majority of instances involved treason (pp. 42, 54). See also Peters, pp. 79–80; Hanson, pp. 56–58, 62–68.

23. Significantly Scripture and official doctrine tended to conflate the two crimes—"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Samuel XV.23); see also Stuart Clark, "King James's *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship," in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, ed. Sydney Anglo (London, 1977), p. 176.

24. Maus, pp. 34–35, quoting Fernando Pulton, *De Pace Regis et Regnis* (1610), p. 108, and Francis Bacon, *A Declaration of the Practices and Treasons Attempted by Robert, Late Earl of Essex, and His Complices* (1601), K2. For an interesting discussion of treason and the early modern discourse of inwardness, see Karin S. Coddon, "'Suche Strange Desygns': Madness, Subjectivity, and Treason in *Hamlet* and Elizabethan Culture," *Renaissance Drama*, 20 (1989), 51–75. The legal redefinition of treason from a physical to a mental action was originally made in a statute of Edward III in 1352 (25 Edw. 3, St. 5, C2)—see Karen Cunningham, "'A Spanish Heart in an English Body': the Raleigh treason trial and the poetics of proof," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992), 327–28.

25. See, e.g., the apologetic pamphlet *A Declaration of the fauourable dealing of her Maiesties Commissioners appointed for the Examination of certaine Traiteurs, and of tortures vnjustly reported to be*

ally “dramatize[s] the connection between two dreaded forms of exposure, open wounds and confession,” as the victim’s “melting body is turned inside out, revealing the most inward and secret parts of him.”<sup>26</sup> The goal of English torture, as the language of official warrants made clear, was not confession but “discouerie,” the “manifestacion,” or “boulting forth of the truth.”<sup>27</sup> So the dramatist Thomas Kyd, himself under torture, hopes his betrayers will in turn be put to the question, their lives “examined & ripped up effectually” to “break open their lewd designs and see into the truth.”<sup>28</sup> It was a procedure designed to enact, in a spectacular and exemplary fashion, the uncovering of hidden truths imagined as “actually contained within the victim’s body.”<sup>29</sup> Thus it always involved *agon* as well as agony, and was marked (as the very terminology of “putting to the question” implies) by a distinct “rhetorical structure which posit[ed] a victim in possession of a *hidden truth* that the interrogator must struggle to uncover.”<sup>30</sup> In this sense, as Hanson suggests, it was part and parcel of a larger “discourse of discovery” in which, whether by “the crossing of seas or the parting of flesh, the mask is stripped away, making knowledge and sight seem equivalent.”<sup>31</sup> There is thus a certain telling symmetry in the placement of an episode of torture at

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*done vpon them for matters of religion* (1583), produced for Burghley, but now reckoned to be the work of the playwright and torturer, Thomas Norton. The whole thrust of Norton’s text is to suggest that torture provides the only proper method of exposing the deceitful treachery of Campion and his associates, who not only “secretly wandered in . . . *Englande* in a disguised sort . . . to make speciall preparations of treasons,” but contrived to hide their “curst heart” and “to keepe themselves couert vnder pretence of temporarie and permissiue obedience to her Maiestie,” and sought to protect themselves during interrogation by never answering “plainely, but sophisticatedly, deceitfully and traiterously” and by using “hypocriticall and sophistical speach” (Aiiiv–Aaiiiv).

26. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: the Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, 1985), pp. 46, 53.

27. Hanson, “Torture and Truth,” p. 53.

28. Quoted in Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (New York, 1994), p. 43.

29. Hanson, “Torture and Truth,” p. 66; and see my “What Strange Riddle’s This: Deciphering ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore,” in *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions* ed. Michael Neill (Cambridge, Eng., 1988), pp. 156–58. The problematics of proof in a context where treason is imagined as something hidden within the body are discussed by Cunningham, “‘A Spanish Heart in an English Body,’” who recognizes the symbolic importance of displaying the traitor’s heart as a form of material proof (p. 345).

30. Hanson, “Torture and Truth,” pp. 54–55 (my emphasis).

31. Hanson, p. 54.

the center of a voyaging narrative that offers to describe and lay bare the treacherous "subtilties" of a distant nation.

For Edmund Scott the undermining and firing of the English factory was the climax in a catalogue of "murther, theft, warres, fire, and treason" (D1v) that marked the passage of the year 1604—an act of "treason" (however loosely defined) that bore all the marks of guile and secret treachery that characterized the English experience of "*that rude and dangerous Region*" (A2). In his "Instructions Left at Bantam," Lancaster had warned the English: "wheresoeuer you be come, trust none of the Indians, for their bodies and soules be whollie treason";<sup>32</sup> and Scott's own title foregrounds the "Subtilties" (cunning, wily stratagems) and "Pollicies" (crafty devices) of the East Indians, both Chinese and Javan, while his narrative constantly draws attention to their untrustworthy nature, expressed in a propensity for such underhand vices as "stealing" (N2), "poysoning" (G2) and nocturnal throat-cutting (1).<sup>33</sup> Deceit and fraud are all around, tainting even the behavior of their fellow Europeans: warned by the Dutch early in their stay that the Protector himself is plotting against them, the English quickly interpret this official's reassurances as "dissimulation to borrow money of us," while crediting his insistence that the Dutch themselves are dissemblers: "Now whether the *Protector* lyed to vs, in denying it; or that the *Hollanders* did dissemble with vs, wee can not certainly tell; but he said plainly, the *Hollanders* lyed: and to speake thrueth, I think they can desemble, and the *Protector* is a villaine" (B2). Yet, although the Dutch are convicted of dissembling in this way, it is not interpreted as a sign of their essentially deceitful make-up, or understood to compromise their natural kinship with the English; indeed, Scott declares, "though wee were mortall enemies in our trade, in all other matters wee were friends, and would haue liued and dyed one for the other" (H3). "The *Iavans and Chyneses*," by contrast, are identified as being "from the highest to the lowest . . . all villaines, [who] haue not one sparke of grace in them" (F3v). "The *Chyneses*" are especially denigrated as "very craftie people in trading, vsing all kinds of cosoning & deceit which may be possible to be devised . . . [who] will steale, and doe any kind of villanie, to get

32. *Voyages of Sir James Lancaster*, p. 161.

33. Purchas similarly avers that "the Javians be reckoned among the greatest pickers and theeves of the world" (p. 115).



wealth" (N2, N3v). They are interlopers whose relation even to their (innately treacherous) Javan hosts constitutes a kind of subtle treason, since they are said (in a fashion that disconcertingly mimics the ambitions of the English themselves) to "sucke away the wealth of the Land," living "like *Iewes* . . . crooching vnder them, [only to] robb them of their wealth, and send it for *Chyna*" (M4v, N2). Thus even when a group of neighboring Chinese are persuaded to assist the English after the firing of the factory, Scott instinctively knows, as they haggle over payment, that these seeming friends covertly "wish[ed] our house had beene consumed, although they spake it not before vs: for . . . such is their wicked minde" (E3v).

Hinting the goldsmith is presented as the perfect epitome of this greedy and perfidious people—a clipper and counterfeiter of coins (F2v), who works by undermining and secret firework. At the same time this inherent viciousness is compounded by the suspicion that he and his confederates are merely the frontmen for even more dangerous hidden enemies—either "some greate men of the countrey, or the ritch *Chynes*" (F1v-F2); for as Scott explains, "wee were in a ieaousie, that the Protector and some other of the principall of the land had an interest in this act" (F1). The suggestion of such a hidden conspiracy reaching to the very highest levels in the kingdom explains the exceptional narrative prominence given to this episode and to the interrogation that followed: for what was at stake in the questioning of Hinting and his co-conspirators was nothing less than an absolute stripping away of the mask of dissimulation and a "boulting forth" of all the secret treasons of Bantam to reveal the enemy's "wicked minde." In one significant respect only did the interrogation differ from the practice of the Queen's Privy Council: hot irons, the agents of purgative fire, were substituted for the rack.

At the level of literal detection the interrogation yielded only equivocal results, but on the symbolic level Scott endeavors to present it as something of a triumph. For however they respond to English threats and torture, the prisoners are made to reveal their own bent for dissimulation, while the inhabitants of Bantam are offered a signal lesson in the operation of English justice—not least through a carefully graduated treatment of the three prisoners.

Alternately confessing and recanting as torture is applied and relaxed, the first prisoner inculcates three other Chinese, "*Hinting*," "*Boyhie*," and "*Unitie*," but declines to identify any hidden hand

behind their plot, saying "hee would accuse no man that was not guiltie, how much soeuer we did torment him" (F2). Dissatisfied with these limited revelations, Scott promises to spare his life "if hee would tell me the truth," but, since the man will do no more than repeat his original story, Scott sends him to execution as an incorrigible dissimulator.

The most co-operative of the three prisoners is Boyhie, the last to be interrogated, who is spared torture on the promise of a full disclosure. But although Boyhie is sufficiently believed to mitigate his sentence, the truth of his confession is subtly compromised by its very self-inculpation, so that his list of "all that were the doers of it" is plausible only "*if one may beleue a villain*" (F3v, my emphasis). Thus even the fullest and least forced confession carries the stigma of dissimulation.

But the greatest mark of villainy is discovered in the obdurate refusal to confess at all. For if the first prisoner exposes his falsehood by telling the wrong sort of story, and the third by telling the right sort, the second reveals the grossness of his treachery by declining to speak at all, retreating into a "sullenness" that seems stubbornly resistant to any increase of agony ("all was one with him"). In English terms, he refuses to plead, a repudiation of due process which itself justified the torture of *peine forte et dure*.<sup>34</sup> The climax of his dumb recalcitrance is reached when Hinting seeks to destroy the very organ of his own speech: "hee neuer shed teare, no nor once turned his head aside, nor stirred hand or foot: but when he [was] demaunded any question, hee would put tongue betweene his teeth, and stryke his chynne vpon his knees to byte it off" (F2v-F3).

There are no means of knowing the reasons for Hinting's seeming obduracy (assuming he even properly understood the questions that were put to him), much less the reasons for this allegedly extreme expression of it. It is perfectly conceivable that what Scott interpreted as a gesture of ultimate defiance was no more than an involuntary motor reaction; or it may have been the man's attempt to distract himself from one unbearable pain by the self-infliction of another.<sup>35</sup>

34. On *peine forte et dure* as the legally prescribed response to a refusal to plead, see Parry, *The History of Torture in England*, Chapter XIV; and Heath, *Torture and English Law*, pp. 248-49, n. 51.

35. For a similar episode involving an Eskimo who "for very choler and disdain . . . bit his tong in twayne with his mouthe," see George Best, *Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher*, ed. Richard Collinson (London, 1867), p. 74.

But to English eyes his gesture must have seemed all too familiar, for it uncannily imitated the notorious catastrophe of one of the most celebrated plays in English theater—a drama of secret murder, treason, and revenge which had been revived (with new additions by Ben Jonson) a little before Scott's departure for Java, *The Spanish Tragedy*.<sup>36</sup> In Kyd's play Hieronimo responds to the King's threat of torture and the demand to reveal the names of his confederates by biting out his tongue:

[HIERONIMO] But never shalt thou force me to reveal  
 The thing which I have vow'd inviolate;  
 And therefore, in despite of all thy threats,  
 Pleas'd with their deaths, and eas'd with their revenge,  
 First take my tongue, and afterwards my heart.  
*He bites out his tongue.*

KING. O monstrous resolution of a wretch.  
 See, Viceroy, he hath bitten forth his tongue  
 Rather than to reveal what we requir'd.  
 . . .  
 We will devise th'extremest kind of death  
 That ever was invented for a wretch. (4.1.187–98)

As though in some vicious travesty of Hieronimo's heroic spite, Hinting stands revealed as a man who will stop at nothing to keep inviolate his treasonable secret; and like Kyd's enraged Spanish King, the English resolve to destroy what they cannot penetrate: "between our men and the *Hollanders*, they shot him almost all to peeces before they left him." It is as if the tormenting opacity of the human body produces a terrible spiral of violence in the torturers: the less the suffering body reveals, the more it is deemed to betray the hiddenness of its own malice; the more obstinately hidden that malice, the greater the force required to unlock it.

The torture and execution of Hinting and his co-conspirators,

36. Henslowe dispensed 40 shillings to Jonson for additions to the play on September 25, 1601, presumably for a revival in the latter part of that year. I know of no evidence concerning Scott's theater-going habits; but it is an interesting detail that his colleague in Java, Captain William Keeling, commander of the *Susan* in Thomas Middleton's relief fleet, has a small but significant place in theater history as the first known producer of an amateur production of *Hamlet*, during a subsequent voyage to the East Indies as commander of the *Dragon* in 1607–1608.

Quotations from Kyd (below) are from *Drama of the English Renaissance*, ed. Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin (New York, 1976), 2 vols.

then, has a central place in Scott's discovery of the treacherous "subtilties" of the East Indians; but it also plays a part in his carefully mounted parade of Englishness. Set against the exemplary justice meted out to the first two conspirators is the clemency exhibited toward the third. Boyhie is spared torture and allowed an honorable death by the *kris* not merely as a reward for the fulness of his confession, but also so that the natives may "see, that *Englishmen* [know] as well how to be mercifull as to tortor, if occasion serue[s]" (F3v). Thus torture and mercy alike contribute to a discourse of national identity, setting off the denizens of the Factory both from their East Indian hosts and from their Dutch rivals; and the lesson first offered to the natives is rehearsed again for English readers as part of the specifically nationalist-mercantilist project of Scott's text.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV

Far from being designed simply as a weapon in a struggle over personal remuneration, as Greenblatt implies, the *Discourse* is clearly meant to stir up nationalist feeling in the interest of an expanded East India trade. The circumstances of its publication by a man with such strong Company connections as Walter Burre<sup>38</sup> suggest that the *Exact*

37. Fifteen years after the publication of Scott's pamphlet, John Fletcher produced what might be read as an interestingly displaced version of his narrative. In Fletcher's tragicomedy *The Island Princess*, set in the Moluccas, undermining and "suddaine fire" become the weapons of the heroic Portuguese Armusia in his struggle with the "subtilties" of the "unfaithfull" and "barbarous" Governor of Ternata. Posing as a trader in "the Merchants house next joyning" (2.3.43), he succeeds in firing the Governor's castle in an action which the Ternatans regard as the "treason" of a villainous "neighbour," but which he himself successfully presents as a legitimate agent of "discovery" and the proper expression of his inflamed passion for the Princess of Tidore, whose brother the Governor treacherously holds captive:

The fire I brought here with me shall doe something,  
Shall burst into materiall flames, and bright ones,  
That all the Island shall stand wondering at it. . . .  
An houre hence, my brave friends, looke for the fury,  
The fire to light us to our honour'd purpose.

Let it flame on, a comely light it gives up  
To our discovery. (2.2.38-46, 2.3.54-55)

As a result of this action Armusia will win the hand of the Princess and secure her conversion to the Christian faith, but not before he has been captured and threatened with fiery torture by the "firebrand" Governor, and himself rescued by "fire-spitting" cannons of the Portuguese (5. 2-4). Although Fletcher's story is based upon a Spanish history almost contemporary with Scott's, he clearly intends his audience to read the virtuous Portuguese as surrogates for the English.

38. See above, n. 5.

*Discourse* was primarily intended to advertise the cause of the Company, which was busily preparing for a third voyage. From the beginning the East India governors had faced considerable obstacles in raising funds for their ventures; and several of the subscribers to the first voyage had failed to meet their engagements, exacerbating the Company's already severe level of debt. The slowness of returns on the first voyage made for problems in mustering sufficient investors for the second; and although the first and second voyages ultimately returned a combined profit of 95%, difficulties experienced in disposing of some of their goods, especially the very large quantities of pepper obtained, meant that the accounts of the two voyages could not be wound up until 1609, eight years after Lancaster's departure.<sup>39</sup> Consequently in 1606, facing a skeptical investment market, the Company had every reason to encourage a publication designed to arouse patriotic enthusiasm for their adventuring.

Anxious lest his pamphlet be misapplied by opponents of the enterprise, Scott is careful to reassure potential successors and investors that (thanks in part to his own efforts) they can now expect much less dangerous conditions, "for then wee were Strangers, and now wee have many friendes there, and the Countrey is growen to much better ciuilitie" (C2). At the same time maintenance of the Bantam factory is presented as essential to "the fame of the English nation";<sup>40</sup> while abandoning it, he insists at the very end of his narrative, "will purchase more infamy to our Nation in all those parts and in *Chyna*, then euer we haue hetherto to gain credit, for it will be thought of them all that either pouerty is the cause, or that we dare not come there for feare of the *Hollanders*" (I3v; M2-2v).

In the context of this nationalist concern, it is significant that Scott's title-page should promise not only to reveal the underhand "Subtilties" and "Pollicies" of the East Indians, but also to recount "what

39. See *Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, pp. xi–xvi, xxx.

40. Scott's language associates his pamphlet with a long line of company propaganda, beginning with the translation of *John Huighen Van Linschoten his Discours of Voyages into y<sup>e</sup> Easte and West Indies* (1598), which is offered by its printer, John Wolfe, to Julius Caesar, judge of the High Court of Admiralty, as a work "very commodious for our *English Nation*" because its author brings "rare *Intelligences* with him from Forreyne parts . . . [and] should be examined by such as are in place and Authority appointed for such purposes" (A1v). Wolfe goes on to persuade his readers that "that this poore Translation may worke in our *English Nation* a further desire and increase of Honour ouer all *Countreys* of the *World*, and as it hath hitherto aduanced the Credite of the Realme by defending the same with our *Wodden Walles* . . . so it would employ the same in forraine partes" (A4).

hath happened to the *English Nation* at *Bantan*;" for Scott is anxious to persuade his readers that the survival of the English factory is critical to the fame and fortunes of the English nation at large. Of course "nation" could sometimes carry the restricted sense of "a number of persons belonging to a given nation," but the text is so shot through with an insistence upon the *representative* nature of this small English merchant community that their experiences acquire an exemplary status. Surrounded by a sea of hostile foreigners, threatened with treasonable conspiracy and undermining stratagem,<sup>41</sup> the factory resembles a microcosm of the English nation, sustained by the same siege-mentality that was so decisive in shaping the Elizabethan sense of national identity.

Fittingly enough, the merchants chose the anniversary of Elizabeth's coronation for an extraordinary public assertion of their defiant Englishness. For reasons that remain mysterious—since they had been established in Bantam for several years before the arrival of the English<sup>42</sup>—the Dutch are alleged to have stolen the identity of the English: "the common people knew vs not from the *Hollanders*, for both they and wee were all called by the name of *English-men*, by reason of their vsurping our name at their first comming hither to trade: and as wee passed along the Stree[t]s wee might heare the people in the Market rayling and exclayming on the *English-men*, although they meant the *Hollanders*" (C2v). Casting about for ways to rectify this unsettling and potentially dangerous confusion, the English resolved on a spectacular display of heraldic difference, and seized on the Queen's Accession Day as an occasion for it. The choice was a predictable one, given the way in which "the queen's holy day" had been promoted as a festival of "national cohesion and solidarity":<sup>43</sup>

41. "Three times euerie weeke I vsed to search all the *Chyneses* howses round about vs, for feare of more vndermining" (K1).

42. The Dutch factory was established by agreement with the ruler during the voyage of Cornelisz. Houtman, 1595–1597. One possible explanation for the confusion is that Drake was apparently favorably remembered in the Malayan archipelago, and was cited by the English themselves to demonstrate their prior right to trade. See *The Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, pp. 26, 50. John Wolfe's address "To the Reader" of *Linschoten his . . . Voyages* emphasizes the priority of Drake and subsequent English voyagers, claiming that the "the *People* of the *Low Countreys* . . . fell to the like trafficke into the *Indies*" only because they were "instructed by the diligent search and traueell of the *English Nation*" (A3v).

43. See Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, pp. 50, 52. The best accounts of the popular festivities organized throughout the kingdom on Accession Day are in Cressy, pp. 50–59, and Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, 1977), pp. 117–28.

now the 17 day of Nouember drawing neere, the which wee held to be our Coronation day, (for at that time, nor the yeere following, wee knew not other but that Queene *Elizabeth* was lyuing) wee all suted our selues in new Apparrell of Silke, and made vs all Scarfes of white and redd Taffata, beeing our Countries Cullours. Also, wee made a Flagge with the red Crosse thorow the middle: and because wee that were the Marchants would be knowne from our men, wee edged our Scarffes with a deepe Fringe of Golde, and that was our difference.

Our day beeing come, wee set vp our Banner of *Saint Gorge* vpon the top of our House, and with our Drumme and Shott wee marched vp and downe within our owne grounde, beeing but fourteene in number, wherefore wee could march but single one after another; plying our Shotte, and casting our selues in Rings and Esses.

The *Sabyndar*, and diuers of the chieftest of the Land, hearing our Peeces, came to see vs, and to enquire the cause of our triumph. Wee told them, that that day sixe and fourtie yeare our *Queene* was Crowned, wherefore all *English-men*, in what Countrey soeuer they were, did triumph on that day.

Hee greatly commended vs for hauing our *Prince* in reuerence in so farre a Countrey.

Many others did aske vs, Why the *English-men* at the other house did not so? Wee told them they were no *English-men* but *Hollanders*, and that they had no King, but their Land was ruled by *Gouernors*.

Some would reply againe and say, They named them selues to be *English-men* at the first, and therefor they tooke them to be *English-men*: but wee would tell them againe, they were of another Countrey neere *England*, and spake an other Language; and if that they did talke with them now, they should heare they were of an other Nation (C2v).

A certain pathos attaches to the fragile jingoism of this sadly undermanned pageant—especially in the light of the Queen's recent demise; and Scott himself is embarrassed by the thought that it may be "counted fantastick, when it should be knowne in *England*" (C3). As the small band of English march up and down their compound, with flags waving, drums beating, and muskets firing, they resemble nothing so much as a troupe of those actors whose "triumphs" pageanted forth the history of English arms in France—Henry V's "happy few" facing overwhelming odds at Agincourt, or Talbot's heroic band "parked and bounded in a pale, / A little herd of England's timorous deer / Mazed with a yelping kennel of French curs" (1 *Henry VI*, 4.3.45–47). But what might appear fantastically theatrical at home, becomes an essential technique of self-representation here at the extreme margin of English power, where the acuteness of the need

to establish a sense of national difference is exactly proportionate to the constant threat of its erasure.

The English triumph in Bantam had a distinctly more martial cast than was usual in London celebrations of the Accession—although these sometimes involved the staging of mock-battles and the discharge of ordnance from the Tower, in addition to the usual bell-ringing, processions, and displays of civic pageantry.<sup>44</sup> Evidently modelled on the drilling of the city train bands in St. George's Fields, Mile End, its effect was to emphasize the militant nationalistic defiance that always underlay Accession Day festivities—their implicit identification of Elizabeth's royal authority with a Protestant eschatological history of deliverance from the papal Antichrist, and their mobilization of a mythology of siege in which "the forces of evil still [menacing] England both within and without . . . were only kept at bay while God's holy handmaiden ruled."<sup>45</sup> In Scott's pageant English resistance to Dutch usurpation and Javan indifference replayed the trope of Protestant self-definition as a colonialist figure of purely national separation. It did so, moreover, in a ceremonial context which firmly located the London mercantile caste at the very heart of national identity. Later they would mount a still more elaborate triumph, heralded by a trumpeter and ten musketeers, "all very well furnished with their countryes colours," by way of an English contribution to the coronation shows for the new King of Bantam (L2-L3); and in the following year (1604), still unaware of the Queen's death, they once again marked her accession with feasting and an extravagant display of musketry.

Scott is at pains to insist on the salutary impression of such demonstrations upon the natives. The first Accession Day triumph immediately sets them apart from the Dutch rivals:

The multitude of people did admire to see so few of vs deliuer so much Shott: for the *Iavans* and *Chyneses* are no good Shott.

44. The conduct of such musters, which were often organized as part of the May Day festivities, is elaborately parodied in Act 5 of Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), where the apprentice Rafe and his company parade with drums, colors, and shot, and cast themselves in a crescent, among other "whimsical figures" popular with Elizabethan militia. For useful commentary on these maneuvers, see the Introduction and Notes to Herbert S. Merch's edition of the play, *Yale Studies in English* 33 (New York, 1908), pp. cxi–cxiii, 249–61.

45. Strong, pp. 126–27; see also Cressy, pp. 52–54.



In the after noone I caused our men to walke abroad the Towne and the Market, whereby the people might take notice of them.

Their redd and white Scarffes and Hatbandes, made such a shew, that the Inhabitants of those partes had neuer seene the like: so that euer after that day, wee were knowne from the *Hollanders*; and manie times the Children in the Streetes would runne after vs crying, *Oran Engrees bayck, oran Hollanda iahad*: which is, The *English*-men are good, the *Hollanders* are naught. (C3)<sup>46</sup>

Despite this apparently decisive success, however, a continuing need to exhibit their difference from the Dutch is expressed in the endless jockeying for position with the Dutch that results in disputes over precedence at the Protector's court—"for an Englishman scornes to giue place to Hollanders in any forraine Country" (D3)—issuing in several open brawls, the last of which breaks out on the very eve of their departure: "they . . . thi[n]king to be lords of all those parts whe[n] we are gone" (M2v).<sup>47</sup> Aggressive anxiety about the Dutch is matched by an equal determination to establish their superiority to the East Indians. The Javans have to be impressed with the moral superiority of the English, with their power to secure justice for

46. A similar view is attributed to the natives of Ternate in an anonymous pamphlet *The Last East-Indian Voyage* (1606), with its more openly hostile view of the Dutch: "The people of the country, understanding the Hollanders had procured our banishment, were much offended that the petty prince of Holland and his [people?] (whom they esteemed but debauched drunkards) should be esteemed before the mighty King of England and his subjects" (*Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, p. 57). The difficulties experienced with the Dutch contrasted with the Company's expectations, as set out in Sir Henry Middleton's commission, which anticipated only "the mallice of the Portingalls towards our discovery of the trade to those partes" (*Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, p. 187).

47. The abbreviated version of the pamphlet printed in *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625), which apparently derives independently from Scott's manuscript, includes a passage in which Scott himself advances a quarrel over which party should march first in the processions celebrating the King's circumcision. The Dutch, Scott explains, "would by no meanes goe behind our men; neither would our men goe behind them: they were proud because they were many more in number: and our men were proud because that had much gayer apparell: for they were all in their sylk suits, hauing scarfes and hatbands of their countryes colours which made a very faire show; and they [the Dutch] had on their tarrd cotes, greasy thrumbd cappes, & those that had shirts on, they hung out betweene their legges" (K4v). In the *Purchas* version Scott adds that "The next time we saw their marchants . . . I asked one of them if he thought Holland were now able to wage warre with England, that there should be such equalitie between their men and ours, to strive who should go foremost; and likewise wee told them all that, if Englishmen had not once gone before, their nation might have gone behind all nations of Christendome long agoe" (cited in *Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, p. 154). Most of the cuts made in Burre's edition seem designed to mute Scott's attacks on England's Protestant allies, the Dutch, a motive which no longer applied to *Purchas*' publication in the immediate wake of the Amboyna massacre.

themselves, and where necessary, to enforce a bargain. The Protector is roundly informed by Scott “that *Kinges* must keepe their wordes, or else they were no *Kinges*”—a lesson which he is reminded their sovereign has already impressed upon the King of Spain, to the cost of “many thousandes of mens liues”: “it was well knowne to all Nations, that wee did not onely burne and spoile at home, but also came into those partes of the worlde, and tooke away his subiectes goods, the which himself could witnesse” (G4). If the English are distinguished from the Dutch as people who have kings rather than governors, they are equally distinct from the Javans and the Spanish as a people whose monarchy is subject to the limitations of the law.

Difference is insisted on both for tactical reasons (as a mode of psychological self-protection in a condition of real vulnerability) and for strategic ones (as a way of impressing on the natives the advisability of accommodating English commercial ambitions at the expense of their rivals); and it is re-rehearsed in the text itself as a means of enlisting patriotic identification with a commercial enterprise—indeed, of asserting the essential identity of national and city mercantile interests. But the effect of such insistence is seldom if ever contained by its immediate objects. For what texts of this sort simultaneously produce is an ideology of cultural and ultimately of racial difference that will become part of the enabling discourse not merely of mercantile expansion but of imperial conquest.

This ideology is perhaps most nakedly disclosed when Scott recounts the “Tragedie” of a mulatto slave accused of multiple murder. As “our mulatto,” the slave is defined as both inside and yet ultimately excluded from “the English nation at *Bantan*.” Ironically enough, his crime itself seems to have been provoked by an explosion of something like racial resentment. Having been drinking with “one of his countrey men” who belongs to a visiting Flemish ship, he is enraged when the Provost of the vessel tries to beat his companion on board. “Tickled in the heade with wine,” he seeks out and kills both the Fleming and the other mulatto (who he fears will inform upon him), as well as “a poore *Iauan*” (D2). The case attracts local notoriety because of the rumor “that there was an Englishman to be executed”; large crowds turn up to witness the execution but are taken aback to discover the prisoner “a black man.” At this point Scott seizes the opportunity to instruct the Javans as to the racial significance of mulatto criminality: “wee told them he was iust of their own colour &

condition and that an Englishman or white man would not doe such a bloody deede" (D4v). What bloody deeds an Englishman or white man *could* do the Javans would be taught in the case of Hinting and his companions: but as with the mulatto, after all, they too might be dismissed (in Scott's crude ethnology) as persons of the same "colour and condition" as the Javans,<sup>48</sup> and the violence visited upon their bodies was governed, as Scott conceived it, by superior English notions of justice. He seems to have convinced himself that the torture of Hinting was an essential part of those efforts by which the English impressed "the fame of the English nation" not merely upon the Javans but upon the "many nations [that resort to this towne of *Bantan*]":

wee were growne a common admiration amongst them all; that wee being so few, should carrie such a porte as wee did, neuer putting vp the least wrong that was offered either by *Iauans* or *Chyneses*, but alwaies did Iustice our owne selues. . . . (and I haue hearde many straungers speake it, that haue beene present, when wee haue beaten some *Iauans*) That they neuer knewe . . . any Nation but wee, that were Liedgers there, that durst once strike a *Iauan*, in *Bantan*: and it was a common talke among all straungers, and others, how wee stooode at defyance with those that hated vs for our goods, . . . neuer offering any the leaste wronge to the meanest in the Towne, and receiuing from the better sorte a commendation before the *Hollanders* or any other Nation: and it will bee a thing generallye talked off, in all parts of the worlde, what different carriage wee have beene of, when it is likely there will bee no *English* there. (14)

Yet for all the rhetorical strategies that seek to contain the wild excess of Hinting's torture within the forms of English civility (rather as the pageant is designed to contain their excess of fear), nothing can altogether disguise the frenzy which discloses it as a half-deranged reaction to the stress of isolation and the terror of fire, exacerbated by the uninterpretable obduracy of the victim. Between the nullity of the

48. In a thoughtful essay on early modern ideas of race, Lynda Boose inquires whether the English "participate[d] in anything like the modern sense of some definitively *racial*, shared 'Europeanness'?" Scott's sense of the distinction between "white men" and those of other colors (whom he tends to lump together) suggests that such a sense had certainly begun to emerge by the early seventeenth century. See Lynda E. Boose, "'The Getting of a Lawful Race': Racial discourse in early modern England and the unrepresentable black woman," in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London and New York, 1993), pp. 35–54 (p. 38).

victim's silence and the annihilation of firing there is, in the end, little to choose. Both result in a kind of frantic defiance.

"Standing at defiance," empaed in their small and vulnerable factory, seems to be the characteristic posture of "the English nation at *Bantan*." But ironically the very posture appears to court the annihilation they fear: no sooner do they erect a fence to keep the enemy at bay than "wee looked euery houre when it should be burnt down" (H3). Less than twenty years after Scott's departure, his nightmare of a time "when there will be no English there" was to be fulfilled by the massacre of English merchants at Amboyna—where the dead included Scott's "fellow," Gabriel Towerson.<sup>49</sup> Neither the subtleties of the Chinese nor the policies of the Javans were to blame, however, but the imperial rivalry of the Dutch, those ambiguous bosom friends and alleged usurpers of English identity, who now "unbounded with Covetousnes and Ambition," according to Arthur Wilson, "strove to hinder their Neighbours, and best friends the English. . . . and began to practise their utter extirpation: Not by a Massacre, for that had beene a *merciful Mischief*, but by torture."<sup>50</sup> The charge, as in the Hinting case, was "Treason," and the torture, although similarly intended "to make their *Cruelty Justice*," was conducted "in so horrid and savage a manner" that, from the English perspective, it again threatened to collapse the difference between "white men" and barbarous Others—"as if they had sucked their *Rage* from *Indian Tigers*."<sup>51</sup> With a bitterly exacting irony, the sufferings of the English and their alleged Japanese accomplices mimicked the fiery pangs of Hinting and his companions: "*Amboina* was the bloody *Stage* where they acted this black *Tragedie*; and *Fire*, and *Water* were their *Engins*. For pretending the chief *Agent* Captain *Gabriel Towerson*, and the rest of the *English Factory*, had an intention by the assistance of some few poor *Japoneses*, to possess themselves of the *Castle*, and expel the Dutch out of the

49. *Voyages of Sir James Lancaster*, p. 133, fn. 1; *Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, p. 98, fn. 1. The Amboyna massacre seems to be foreshadowed in another of the passages excised from Burre's edition, where the violent brawl that erupted on the eve of the English departure is described in much greater detail: here the English are warned "with weeping eies" by fellow-countrymen among the Dutch crews not to come aboard their ships, "for strait order was given to kill as many Englishmen as they could, either aboard or on shore" (cited in *Voyage of Sir Henry Middleton*, pp. 165–66, n. 1).

50. Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain* (1653), p. 281. I am indebted to Albert Braummuller for drawing this passage to my attention.

51. Wilson, p. 281.

*Island*, they seized upon them, and set their bloody *Engins* [i.e. the rack] a work. . . . and such whose sturdy innocence would not be compelled to accuse themselves, they burned the soles of their feet with candles and *with those burning instruments made such holes in their sides that they might see their entrails, yet would not see their innocence.*"<sup>52</sup> For the Dutch torturers (as for their English counterparts), we might suppose, the maddening opacity of the human body was interpreted as the expression of a guilty obstinacy that must be laid open at any cost. The exigencies of inquisitorial torture, however, demanded a less ambiguous narrative resolution: "So *exquisite* were they in their Devillish Crueltie, as will be gastly to express, what was it there to suffer! Thus having tired the poor Men with Torture, and they being willing to die quickly, confest whatsoever their Cruel Tormentors would have them say. The *Dutch* having in the *furnace* wrought them to accuse themselves, got their *Confessions* under their hands, and so concluded their *Barbarism*, with cutting off some of their heads."<sup>53</sup>

## V

What lessons are to be drawn from Greenblatt's curious (mis)appropriation of the story of Hinting's torture? At one level of course he is perfectly correct to remind us (once again) that history has been, for the most part, written by its winners, and that enforced silence has too often been added to suffering as the price of defeat: the biting of Hinting's tongue seems a cruelly exact emblem for this double victimage. At the same time it is possible to feel a degree of respect for Greenblatt's reluctance to intrude upon the victim's silence. Nevertheless his stance seems to me in the last analysis both evasive and dangerous. It is not simply that his substantially decontextualized use of the anecdote carelessly obscures what the pamphlet has to reveal about the emergent discourses of race and nation at a critical point in early imperial development; but that his insistence on the primacy of "estrangement" and "wonder" permits a larger disingenuousness about history and the historicist project to which he is committed.

No one has more subtly or more movingly explored the anxiety about the complicities of narrative, power, and violence which trou-

52. Wilson, p. 281 (emphasis added).

53. Wilson, pp. 281–82.

ble Greenblatt than the white South African novelist J. M. Coetzee. In two extraordinary parables, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*, Coetzee puts his own writerly relation with history to the question. In the first of them, the narrator-protagonist, a kindly old magistrate in some unplaced frontier town, rescues a barbarian girl from the state's torturers, only to discover in his own need to understand her—to force in her impervious surface an opening out of which a narrative might be drawn—a version of the torturer's obsession. In the second (a reworking of *Robinson Crusoe* from which my first epigraph is drawn) the narrator-protagonist, Susan Barton, supposedly Crusoe's and Friday's fellow castaway on his island, tries to persuade the writer "Mr Foe" of the need to tell Friday's story. Her own narrative efforts founder on the fact that Friday, an African slave, has (like Scott's victim) lost his tongue—although whether at the hands of slavers (as Crusoe insists), or those of Crusoe himself, or by his own act, remains uncertain. But their discussions persuade Foe that "Till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story. . . . For as long as [Friday] is as he is dumb we can . . . continue to use him as we wish."<sup>54</sup> The writer, however, cannot help disclosing the coercive violence implicit in this sympathetically aroused ambition: "We must *make* Friday's silence speak" (p. 142; my emphasis); and Coetzee's novel ends by insisting on Friday's ultimate inaccessibility to the compulsions of the colonizer's narrative: "this is not a place of words. . . . This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday" (p. 157).

The ending of *Foe* can be read as a surrender to the power of something that resembles Greenblatt's "wonder": "[Friday's] mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes up through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward, and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face" (p. 157). Is Greenblatt justified, then, in his abdication, with its implication that there are certain stories better left untold, because there is no way of telling them that does not involve some collusion with the violence of the oppressor? Clearly I do not think so; and I cite Coetzee partly because his own

54. J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London, 1986), pp. 141, 148.

answer to the challenge of *Foe* was to turn back, in *Age of Iron*, to a very different interrogation of history, one that seemed to confront more directly than he had hitherto been willing to do the history of the colonizers' oppression. *Age of Iron* is a book that acknowledges the ultimate inaccessibility of the Other's history, which is by definition off-limits, while insisting on the necessity, however intractable it may seem, of articulating one's own relation to it.

I have tried to show that when it is placed in context, Scott's account of Hinting's torture is actually a great deal more articulate than Greenblatt allows it to appear, that it makes sense as a part of a narrative that can include the comic pathos of the improvised Accession Day triumph at one extreme, and the ugly racial arrogance associated with the mulatto's execution at another—a narrative in which the heartfelt anxieties of extreme cultural dislocation are disconcertingly manipulated into the service of chauvinism and mercantile ambition. Such a story responds to a literary reading precisely because it resists formulaic moralization; and my final objection to Greenblatt's handling is that all his subtlety only serves to render it down to a simple fable about the iniquity of European empire, thinly veiled by the mystifications of "wonder." At the same time his strategy of estrangement serves to put a quite impermissible distance between himself and the torturer—one that no full and sympathetic reading of the narrative would allow. In this fashion he contrives to identify himself with the silence of the victim—into which, indeed, he symbolically withdraws. I do not mean to cheapen Greenblatt's much meditated sense of kinship with the victims of history's long holocaust when I say that it can lead to willful misreadings of history. Part of the imaginative value of reading Scott should be to remind us (once again, if such a thing were needed) that atrocities are by no means the work of unnatural Others, or the preserve of monsters. They belong to a humanly comprehensible history in which we are all, in deeply conflicting ways, implicated. That, I am afraid, is part of what it means to be human—to have a history at all. To think otherwise, however comforting it may be, is to give oneself to a deception whose consequences litter the world from the Middle East to Ireland, and to the slaughterhouse that was Yugoslavia.

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